

Criminal Background Check Policy

This policy applies to all University of Tampa (UT) physician assistant conditionally accepted applicants and enrolled PA students. A national Criminal Background Check (“CBC”) is required of each conditionally accepted applicant prior to full admission and at least annually thereafter for every continuing student.

Conditionally accepted applicants who have an adverse finding on a CBC report may be denied full admission/matriculation, and current students may be disciplined in accordance with established University/PA Program policy.

Definitions:

Adverse Finding: A term describing a CBC report of anything other than “clear” or “no findings” or other similar language used by the approved vendor that issued the CBC report.

Break in Enrollment: A term describing non-attendance of one full semester (Fall, Spring, Summer) or more.

Conditional Acceptance: A term describing an applicant’s status when basic review criteria have been met at the time an admission offer is extended but prior to full admission to an academic program.

Full Admission: A term indicating that a student has met all program admission requirements and has been cleared of any Adverse Findings that would prevent eligibility for enrollment.

Matriculated: A term describing students enrolled in a University program as degree candidates.

Rationale for this policy:

The PA Program is committed to accepting and educating students who meet established standards for professionalism, are of high moral character, and are suitable candidates for professional certification or licensure.

The purposes of conducting a CBC are multiple:

1. Health care providers are entrusted with the health, safety, and welfare of patients, have access to confidential and sensitive information; and operate in settings that require the exercise of good judgment and ethical behavior. Thus, an assessment of a student’s or conditionally accepted applicant’s suitability to function in clinical settings is imperative to ensure the highest level of integrity in students in the PA program.
2. Clinical facilities are increasingly required by their accreditation agencies to obtain a CBC for security purposes on individuals who supervise care, render treatment, and provide services within the facility.
3. Clinical rotations are an essential element in PA training. Students who cannot participate in clinical rotations because of criminal or other adverse activities reported in CBCs are unable to fulfill the requirements of a degree program. Therefore, these issues must be resolved prior to a commitment of resources by the University, student, or conditionally accepted applicant.
4. Additionally a CBC is required to (a) meet the contractual obligations contained in affiliation agreements between UT and the various health care facilities; (b) perform due diligence and competency assessment of all individuals who may have contact with patients and/or research

participants; (c) ensure uniform compliance with JCAHO standards and agency regulations pertaining to human resource management; (d) meet the public demands of greater diligence in light of the national reports on deaths resulting from medical malpractice and medical errors.

Timing and Procedure for the CBC:

Conditionally Accepted Applicants:

- 1) The CBC may not be used as a component of the application, interview, or decision-making process regarding conditional acceptance to a designated program. It is a mandatory component of the post-conditional acceptance matriculation process.
- 2) Conditionally accepted applicants must do the following by May 1st of the year of matriculation to be eligible for full admission (a) Complete and authorize the release of the CBC Consent and Release Form and (b) Complete the CBC.
- 3) Instructions to complete the CBC:
 - Log into [Castlebranch](#)
 - Click on the “place order” tab
 - Use this package code for the UT PA Program if you are in Florida: **HW42in**
 - Use this package code for the UT PA Program if you are out of state: **HW42out**
 - Follow instructions as they appear on screen to complete the process
- 4) Any conditionally accepted applicant who fails to complete the above will not be allowed to begin classes and may jeopardize full admission status to the PA program.

Enrolled PA Students:

- 1) At a minimum, complete a CBC in November of the didactic phase in preparation for entry into the clinical phase. (Or more frequently if required by clinical rotation sites or by the University).
- 2) Instructions to complete the CBC:
 - a. Log into [Castlebranch](#)
 - b. Click on the “place order” tab
 - c. Use this package code for the UT PA Program if you are in Florida: **HW42in**
 - d. Follow instructions as they appear on screen to complete the process
- 3) Any student who fails to adhere to the CBC deadline will be suspended from all classes until the CBC is completed. All exams and assessments missed while on suspension will be recorded with a grade of “0” or “Fail” as this is not an excused absence from the program.
- 4) While enrolled in the PA program, students must notify the PA program director immediately or within five (5) business days of any offense, arrest or charge that may alter the results of their CBC. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the program.

Costs:

- 1) The costs associated with the CBC is the responsibility of the applicant.
- 2) If an additional CBC is requested or required, the costs are the responsibility of the student.

Period of Validity:

The program will generally honor criminal background checks for a period of one year, but a CBC may be necessary more frequently, depending on class or rotation site requirements. Any student who has a break in enrollment may be required to complete a CBC before he/she is permitted to re-enroll in any courses.

Scope of the CBC:

The state of Florida and participating clinical sites require a Level 2 background check for CBC. Level 2 checks include fingerprint-based searches of records maintained by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, national FBI criminal history searches, and county criminal record searches through local courts or law enforcement agencies. For more information: [ezfingerprints](#) This site includes applicable Florida law and what the Level 2 CBC reports.

Procedure for Review of CBC:*Conditionally Accepted Applicants*

- 1) The PA program utilizes a Criminal Background Review Committee (CBRC)* to review any CBC that contains adverse findings.
- 2) An approved PA staff member will review all CBC reports to identify any adverse findings and refer those to its CBRC.
- 3) The CBRC consist of the following University employees:
 - a) Director of Graduate Admissions
 - b) PA Program Dept. Chair
 - c) PA Program Admissions Chair
 - d) PA Program Clinical Director
- 4) The CBRC will review each referred CBC to determine the potential impact that adverse findings might have on the conditionally accepted applicant's ability to be fully admitted into the PA program.
- 5) If the CBRC determines a CBC includes an adverse finding that:
 - a. was previously undisclosed without valid reason
 - b. is more egregious than was disclosed
 - c. may preclude the acceptance or participation in educational, practicum or rotation activities
 - d. conflicts with what was reported by the applicant on application materials then the CBRC may, by majority vote, recommend that the PA program rescind the conditional offer of admission, fully admitted or admitted on probation.
- 6) If the conditional offer of admission is rescinded, the Director of Graduate Admissions must notify the applicant in writing.
- 7) All applicants with an adverse finding on CBC will meet with the program director to review and sign the disclosure form during the first week of class.

Enrolled Students

- 1) The PA program utilizes a Criminal Background Review Committee (CBRC)* to review any CBC that contains adverse findings.
- 2) The approved PA staff member will review all CBC reports to identify any adverse findings and refer those to its CBRC.
- 3) The CBRC will review each referred CBC to determine the potential impact that any adverse findings might have on the enrolled PA student's educational program of study.
- 4) If the CBRC determines a CBC includes an adverse finding that:
 - a. Violates University or PA Program policy
 - b. Was not self-disclosed as required by PA Program policy (immediately or within 5 business days of incident)
 - c. May preclude acceptance or participation in classes or rotations
 - d. Will impede the student's ability to become licensed or certified in their profession then the CBRC, by majority vote, will recommend that the PA program Professionalism Committee review the student's file for disciplinary action, which may include probation and/or dismissal from the PA Program. The appeals process as defined in the dismissal policy would apply in this situation.

Falsification of Information:

Falsification of information submitted as part of the application process or on the CBC can result in immediate removal of the applicant from the conditionally accepted list or dismissal of an enrolled student from the degree program.

Confidentiality of Records:

The University maintains CBC reports and all records pertaining to the results in confidence, unless release is otherwise required by law. Information about the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is available at: [FERPA](#).

Release of information reported on the CBC may be released to future employers, licensing boards and clinical sites with signed release from the student for purposes of employment credentialing, licensure and site placement.

Record Keeping:

Criminal Background Check reports and all records pertaining to the results will be maintained in the conditionally accepted applicant's file or enrolled student's academic file in the PA Program for the minimum timeframe listed below, unless otherwise required by law:

- Enrolled Students – Five (5) years after graduation
- Conditionally Accepted Applicants – Two (2) years from date of application (provided no anticipated legal action)